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ABSTRACT

Rationales, approaches, and constraints on genocide awareness education at all school levels are discussed. It is critical that students, especially U.S. students who live in a culturally pluralistic society, be made aware of how genocide was perpetrated in the past and of the fact that it is still happening today. A basic genocide awareness glossary is provided. Seven approaches to genocide awareness education are discussed: (1) an international law and world order theme; (2) socio-economic inquiries concerning the causes of genocide; (3) historical studies; (4) affective interpretations based on first-hand accounts; (5) human rights activism; (6) recognition of those who refuse to take part in genocide; and (7) the development of theoretical models of genocide prevention. Four constraints on genocide awareness education are examined: it is uncomfortable and unpopular to teach children about death and destruction; it is politically controversial; there is an ambivalence about U.S. government policies toward minorities; and it is difficult to find a manageable way of teaching the topic. The conclusion, however, is that genocide awareness education must be integrated into the entire curriculum. (RM)

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Ethnic Studies Bulletin Number Six

TEACHING GENOCIDE AWARENESS IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

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GENOCIDE AWARENESS IN PROGRAMS OF PEACE EDUCATION

Frank Andrews Stone

The human tendency to seek to annihilate groups that are regarded as enemies has a long history. The ancient accounts abound with examples such as the Roman conquest of Carthage where the soil was salted in order to prevent it from ever again being productive. During the sack of Rome by the Vandals, in turn, the city's edifices and population were put to the torch. Modern technologies, however, have given human beings new destructive capabilities. Biological warfare and nuclear weapons make it now possible to wipe out an entire people and end their way of life forever. Humanity itself could well be terminated and higher forms of life on planet earth come to an end. Even so-called "conventional" technologies give an awesome power to those who use them destructively.

No part of the world has been free of the tragedies caused by violence. Millions of people were slaughtered in Kampuchea (Cambodia) and their civilization was leveled. At least half a million Communists were massacred in Indonesia in 1965. Systematic efforts have been made in Iran, Iraq and Turkey to eliminate the Kurdish minorities in these countries. Minority groups like the Crimean Turks and the Volga Germans were decimated in the Soviet Union, not to mention the planned murder of over four million land owners by the regime that Stalin headed. During 1972 and 1973 100,000 Hutus, a tribal group in the Republic of Burundi in Central Africa, were killed by the ruling Tutsis. Thousands of other Hutus were forced to flee from their

homeland and have become permanent refugees. Similarly, the policies of many American nations - including our own - toward their native populations have virtually destroyed the aboriginal peoples. One tragic example is the way that Paraguay has dealt with the Ache Indians. Kept from their own way of life, they have been forced onto unproductive reservations where idleness and disease have undermined a once healthy population. All of this evidence indicates that official inhumanity still exists. It will probably continue unless vigorous efforts are made to counter it and bring it to an end.

Although officially sanctioned mass violence has existed for a long time in various forms, only recently has a term been coined to designate it. The word "genocide" originally meant the total destruction of a national group as the result of some intentional policy. The meaning of the term has now been broadened to include all official actions to harm, in whole or in part, various types of human groups. Although the word hadn't been invented at that time, the widespread massacres of the Armenian minority in the Ottoman Empire between 1895 and 1915 were this type of tragedy. Similar vindictiveness was waged on Gypsies, Jews and Poles during the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis in Europe between 1933 and 1945. Sadly, recent history contains other examples of genocide; but these two terrible instances demonstrate what can happen again unless firm steps are taken to prevent any recurrence.

A U.N. Convention to Prevent Genocide

Global attention was drawn to the problem of genocide when in 1946 the General Assembly of the United Nations declared it to be, "a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world."[1] Then on December 9, 1948 the U.N. General Assembly unanimously adopted a Convention that became effective in 1950, after it was ratified by twenty nations.

The sad fact, however, is that this international agreement has been frequently ignored. Although terrible government policies have caused the loss of life on a vast scale among hated minorities in many parts of the world in the last thirty years, no regime has ever been brought before a world tribunal on this account. During the same period of time, also, genocide awareness education has certainly not become a component of the basic learning experienced by children, youth and adults. In part this reflects the relative dirth of global studies and peace education courses everywhere. It is also a reflection of the professional preparation that most teachers receive, which lacks objective data or any instructional methodologies for teaching in this controversial area. Perhaps the biggest cause of neglect is the policy of military/political regimes everywhere to regard genocide awareness education as dangerous and threatening to their continued power. In the United States a major reason we are little concerned with fostering genocide awareness is the failure of the United States Senate to ever ratify the U.N. Genocide Convention.

According to article two of the document, genocide is defined in these words.

> In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, such as:
>
> a. Killing members of the group;
>
> b. Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
>
> c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
>
> d. Imposing measures inte ded to prevent births within the group;
>
> e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.[2]

It is important for us to realize that the basic concept of genocide awareness is to help people recognize that it is a criminal act to deliberately assault the integrity of any legitimate group. The size or status of the victim population makes no difference. Whenever a group of people ceases to exist the creative diversity of humanity is diminished and impoverished. Once they have been annihilated, the same style and conditions of life can never be revived. Like an indangered species, they are permanently lost.

Raphael Lemkin, the individual who more than any other labored to bring about the U.N. Convention against genocide, wrote this explanation of it.

> Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups; and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of individuals belonging to such groups.[3]

There are two main phases in a genocide. The first syndrome is the destruction of the target group's national structure. In other words, the leaders, organizations and institutions of that minority or nation are threatened and terminated. This procedure is followed by a second syndrome of terror. Here, the hostility of the oppressor is vented on the individuals who are identified with the target population. They become the victims of violence regardless of whether they are powerful or weak; innocent or guilty.

It is clear, then, that the term "genocide" represents an inclusive concept that covers a spectrum of policies. The process of deculturation is the least physically violent option. A group is being deculturized when its language, beliefs, patriotism, personal security, health, dignity and economic survival are being threatened. Next in their degrees of violence come lynching, terrorism, massacres and pogrom. A lynching is an extra-legal execution of a minority person. Terrorism is a pattern of planned acts of violence toward an enemy. It may be directed toward selected individuals or groups, or it may be indiscrim-

inant. Part of the fear that terrorism engenders is its impredictable irrationality. It tends to be the tool of the weak who may be frustrated because they lack the power to act in more open ways. Hence the clandestine aspect of terrorist attacks. Massacres entail the wanton murder of groups of people at a particular place and time. They are victims of a general hatred who are killed because they belong to the group, not because of their own personal misdeeds. Finally in this grim list of genocidal acts comes pogroms. A pogrom entails implementing a policy of property damage and destruction, together with mayhem and murder, over a district or region. A massacre involves the loss of life for a good number of the target group who are at a particular location at one point in time. A pogrom is more varied in the types of violence used, and it spreads out over a wider area for a longer time period.

Beyond the levels of genocide that have so far been identified are a gallaxy of types of mass destruction. They include defolination, biological and chemical warfare, and deliberate starvation. At their ultimate, they entail mass bombing of helpless civilian populations and holocaust.

Genocide in all of these degrees and forms is what the U.N. Convention is supposed to outlaw. As was explained, however, since the document was ratified its provisions have never been invoked. National governments and hate groups can pursue genocidal policies without much fear of being exposed or held accountable for their evil deeds. No international force has ever intervened to try to save the victims when a genocide was taking place.

Faced with these sad facts, it is critical that the young people of the world be made aware of genocide. They will soon become members of the "command generation" in their societies, and be the decision makers of tomorrow. If they recognize the dangers of genocidal policies and have been taught to regard these types of behavior as crimes against humanity, genocides will become things of the dark past. Only in this way will they finally come to an end.

A Basic Genocide Awareness Glossary

Words have to be used in order to communicate human experiences and be the vehicles of people's interpretations. When something is nameless and unutterable, it is secret and mysterious. The vocabulary that is connected with genocide must be brought out into the open. When we can recognize and recall these symbols, we also gain some control over them. Here are a half dozen of the key terms that young people everywhere must be able to understand.

CATASTROPHE (from Greek, "to overturn") This word signifies a momentous tragedy or sudden evil event that is marked by effects that range from extreme misfortune to complete overthrow and ruin. This is a euphemism that is now often employed to express the plight of the European Jews under the Nazi regime.

DEPORTATION (from Latin, de - "away, off" + portare - "to carry") Banishment from one's homeland is the meaning of this term; especially the expulsion of a minority or of undesireable aliens without legal recourse. Armenians under the "Young Turk" rule and Jews and other

minorities under the Nazis were summarily deported. The tragic "long march" of the Cherokee Nation from North Carolina to Oklahoma in the United States is another example of deportation.

GHETTO (Believed to have come from Italian as it was used in Venice in 1516.) A ghetto was the section or quarter of a European city to which Jews were restricted. Thus, it also came to mean a slum area in an American city occupied predominantly by members of a minority who feel forced to live there due to economic or social pressure. In the early decades of the twentieth century Armenians belonged to one "millet" or religious nation within the Ottoman Empire, and inhabited segregated quarters of towns and cities. Similarly, the Jews of eastern Europe in the 1930's were still restricted to living in set parts of the communities. In 1939 Adolph Hitler made this declaration concerning German Jews.

> Out with them from all the professions and into the ghetto with them; fence them in somewhere where they can perish as they deserve.[4]

HOLOCAUST (Greek, "a burnt whole sacrificial offering") This term refers to a total or thorough sacrificial destruction, especially when it takes place by fire. The word has come to indicate the death of six million Jews who were exterminated by the Nazi regime in the incinerators of the concentration camps such as Auschwitz, Dachau and Majdanek.

MASSACRE (Old French) The act or an incident of the killing of a large number of human beings under circumstances of atrocity or

cruelty; a wholesale slaughter of human beings. Massacres are often accompanied by mangling and mutilation of both the victims and any survivors.

POGROM (Yiddish from the Russian for "destruction, devastation") The organized looting and massacre of helpless people, usually with the encouragement and connivance of the government officials.

Seven Approaches to Genocide Awareness Education

There are a variety of ways in which students of different ages, backgrounds and levels of maturity can learn to be aware of genocidal policies and acts in the world. Sometimes it may be most effective to combine several of the formats suggested here. There will doubtless be some other good approaches to becoming sensitive of genocides that won't be described here.

1. An International Law and World Order Theme

Transnational relations and international regulations are the focus of this type of teaching. The students discover what has occurred in the past and then project scenarios where better behavioral systems would have prevailed in order to have prevented the disasters. The work of the League of Nations and the United Nations is studied. Events aimed at punishing genocide, such as the Nurmberg Trials, are investigated. Alternative concepts of global security to prevent genocides are explored.

2. Socio-Economic Inquiries concerning the Causes of Genocides

When a radical intergroup conflict occurs that leads to mass violence in a society, it is often linked to people's perceptions that the members of the minority are unfairly advantaged or are exploiting the majority in some way. The Young Turk rulers claimed that their Armenian population was supporting the Allied cause (the enemy), because of having a religious affinity with the British, French and Russians as Christians. This had allegedly developed through commercial and trading relationships because many Armenians had learned western languages and made their livings as import and export agents. The Nazis asserted that the Jews of Europe controlled banking and commerce. It was claimed that there was an international Zionist conspiracy to undermine Germany. This type of thinking is widely used in order to justify genocides.

This second type of study attempts to explore the real conditions that pertained at the time when the violence took place. Its rationale is that when people are informed about the true minority and majority relationships, confrontation can be reduced and the possibility of a "final" solution to the conflict based on intergroup hatred and the frustrations of wartime and defeat will be averted.

3. Historical Studies of Genocides

Ample scholarly data exists for conducting in-depth historical investigations of tragic events such as the Ottoman Genocide of the Armenians in 1915, the Jewish Holocaust under the Nazis during the 1930's and 1940's, the 3,224 lynchings of blacks that took place in

the United States from 1889 to 1918, and the Mai Lai Massacre perpetrated by American troops in Vietnam in the 1970's.[5] Based on the evidence of these case studies, students can try to ascertain what leads to genocidal policies and their implementation. What are the signs, as indicated by these past disasters, that a genocide may be immanent? How could these past catastrophes have been prevented?

4. Affective Interpretations based on First Hand Accounts

There is a tendency for us to want to reduce genocides to statistics and treat their carnage aseptically. We will hear debates about how many people actually lost their lives. Other types of death and destruction that went on simultaneously will be compared with the genocide in order to argue that it really wasn't excessive. A genocide, however, destroys real living human beings. Men, women and children are its victims. Even the aged and infirm are not spared. The target group has its homes wiped out. Its places of business are destroyed. Entire communities are obliterated, never to rise again.

Individuals who actually experienced these conditions have produced literary accounts or documentary films about them. Through their eyes we can come to comprehend what a genocide does to both perpetrators and victims. The entire way of life that once existed in the ghettos and shtetls of eastern Europe is no more. The form of life that functioned in the Armenian "raya" villages and town neighborhoods of the Ottoman Empire was wiped out forever. These and similar living groups of the past are extinct in these forms today. Only tne few survivors who are

willing and able to talk about what happened to them can communicate the pathos of a genocide.

5. Human Rights Activism

While it is necessary that they be able to study about the causes, processes and effects of genocides; most students are going to be frustrated if they can't do anything about them. For this reason, it is important that genocide awareness programs include practical, contemporary human rights activities.

These include becoming involved with efforts to overcome hunger and starvation. They can lead the students to assist political refugees - especially people who have had to flee from Central America or Indochina because they have been threatened with extermination by their governments. Armenian Americans and Jewish Americans have told the author that the genocides of their people are past and over. "Why can't these old tragedies be forgotten as the twentieth century draws to a close?" they ask. But, unfortunately, the bigotry and anti-Semitism that fed the flames of these genocides have not ended. Minorities are still being defamed. Victims are still denied elemental justice. Thousands of people are unjustly imprisoned. Brutalizing political prisoners and prisoners of conscience is the order of the day under many current regimes.

Nobody enjoys facing these sad facts. Strangely enough, we have a tendency to blame the victims, and to resent having to find out what actually happened to them. Unless people do become aware, and get

active as opponents of the genocides of the 1980's, humanity will continue to have massacres in Lebanon, Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka - and many other parts of the world where intergroup hatred is allowed to grow and fester.

6. Recognition of the "Righteous Few"

During every tragedy of genocide there are always a few non-conformists who refuse to take part in the destruction. They often have risked, and lost, their own lives trying to save the victims. Some were citizens of the victimizing countries, while others were the nationals of other states. Both men and women have bravely intervened in this way.

We need to study what this "righteous few" did in order to discover what influences motivate people to act humanely in the midst of mayhem. It is then possible to try to inculcate similar values in the students or give them parallel experiences, so that more people are likely to act affirmatively to oppose any genocidal policies that they may encounter in their lives.

7. Developing Theoretical Models of Genocide Prevention

Through devices such as role playing and scenario planning, the radical disjunctures that can lead to genocides can be simulated. The students can come to recognize the types of incidents that produce confrontations and the escalation of violence that always precede the final crisis. They can then work in order to conceive of alternative chains of events that could reduce the friction and relieve the hatred.

These non-violent strategies can then be used to replace genocides as the means of resolving conflicts.

Some Constraints on Genocide Awareness Education

Genocide has been declared illegal by a United Nations Convention, yet there have been tragic instances in recent years where it has occurred. Faced with such a pressing problem, we may ask why so little instruction in schools and colleges addresses this issue. At least four considerations mitigate against our teaching genocide awareness studies.

First and foremost, it is always uncomfortable and unpopular to teach children and young people about death and destruction. While admittedly human existence does include these tragic aspects, we say, must we dwell on them? There is a strong taboo in American society against realistic treatments of thanatos - human mortality. It is even more so when the deaths being studied were unnatural and caused by the ill will of others. Yet people cannot become aware of the grim facts of genocide in our world without encountering its brutality. Rather than accept this eventuality; many teachers, curriculum writers and boards of education expurge this domain from their instruction.

Second, teaching for genocide awareness is politically controversial. There will be vocal individuals and militant groups in most communities who bitterly oppose any teaching in this area. Any educators who venture into the field will be attacked. For example, when the television film "Holocaust" portraying the experiences of millions of Jews in the Nazi concentration camps during World War II was re-broadcast in September,

1979 by NBC, the local channel in West Hartford, Connecticut was picketed by about thirty protesters. They were members of the Polish American community of New Britain who were angered because they claimed that the screen play made it appear that Poles had all collaborated with the Nazis. It failed to convey, they argued, that Poles were also the victims of the German regime that killed three million Christian Poles as well as a like number of Polish Jews. In other words, representatives of a nation that perceives itself to have been a victim of genocide found themselves portrayed as accomplices to the crime. Intergroup confrontations of this type are not unusual.[5]

Representatives of the Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C. have regularly protested whenever any curricula have made reference to the genocide of the Armenian minority living in the Ottoman Empire in 1915. The claim is made that this was only a relocation of a disloyal population during wartime in order to remove them from the scene of the struggle. The Turkish authorities assert that the claims about the loss of life and property are greatly exaggerated, and that as many or more Muslim Turks lost their lives in the Balkans or on the battle fields. These counter arguments have to be taken into consideration because public opposition to the programs is aroused due to them. Also, court cases have been initiated using these allegations to prevent genocide awareness from being taught.

The third constraint that hampers providing genocide awareness education in this country is our own ambivalence about United States government policies toward minorities - past and present. Who can deny

that the treatment accorded many native Americans in the past was genocidal? Ours was a country that long tolerated and protected slavery as the "peculiar institution," as it was once termed by one of its advocates. The United States Senate refused to accept the League of Nations mandate for a free Armenia after World War I. Our government would not agree to accept non-quota Jewish refugees from Nazi occupied Europe in 1939. We used vast amounts of explosives and defoliants in Vietnam, yet the United States authorities have never repudiated any of these past actions. Any educators who decide to initiate genocide awareness education in their classrooms and schools must be sensitive to the moral quandry about our nation's policies that still divides our society.

Finally, the fourth constraint to initiating genocide awareness studies is the problem of finding a manageable way of teaching this domain. It will not do just to make instruction in this field a "tack on" to what we are already teaching. A "band aid" approach where a very superficial reference to genocide is considered sufficient should also be avoided. There are hundreds of books concerning the Armenian Genocide of 1915, for instance, and thousands about the Jewish Holocaust. Unless we are careful, we can become mired in the complex accounts of past intergroup relations, government policies and official actions. Much of what has been written is protest literature. Although protest is justified, that kind of treatment contains few clues about how future genocides can be prevented. It is possible just to focus on the horror

of what happened in the past, without ever teaching the ways we can use to see that these tragedies never happen again.

The goal of genocide awareness education, therefore, has to be firmly oriented to the present and the future. The purpose of this kind of instruction is not to defame any nation. Teachers must be sure that their students recognize that genocides are the results of evil official policies. In many cases the ordinary citizens of the society had no voice in their government's policy formation. Some of them may bravely have expressed their disapproval of it. Care must be taken that we do not unfairly generalize or stereotype an entire nationality.

Yet, at the same time, a degree of personal and group responsibility for genocides must be acknowledged. National leaders who decide to implement "final solutions" on minority groups in their societies are certainly culpable for what ensues. Military commanders who knowingly decimate helpless civilian populations are carrying out genocidal policies. And organizations that disseminate bigotted and prejudiced accounts of minorities, well designed to inflame passions and lead to violence, are certainly the agents of genocide. It is a legitimate function of education to expose these types of social malignancies and teach methods of countering and controlling them.

Why Genocide Awareness Studies in Peace Education Programs?

In the face of these four formidable hinderances, we may well ask why genocide awareness education should be developed at all. The main

justification is that genocide is a crime against humanity. The basic purpose of all moral education is supporting and sustaining humankind. Educators thus clearly have a mandate to help their students to become sensitive to, able to recognize, and committed to opposing acts of official inhumanity.

Another vital reason for teaching genocide awareness is the fact of cultural pluralism in American and many other societies. There are more than eighty identifiable ethnic groups living in southern New England, for instance, and many of them have been the victims of genocides. Many children and young people will learn about holocausts and massacres at home or within their own cultural communities. They need however, an opportunity to achieve a more inclusive understanding of this problem. They must come to realize that this type of tragedy is not limited to any one group, place or time.

If individuals are to exercise their rights and responsibilities as the citizens of a constitutional democracy who participate in deciding and executing national policies, they must know how genocides were perpetrated in the past. It is imperative that they be aware of what a genocide does to the victimizers as well as the victims; bystanders along with people who are directly involved. The horror of what happens when genocides occur cannot be hidden. We must be able to recognize the possibility that diabolical decisions can rule over human affairs in order not to become callous and brutalized ourselves. This is a matter of consciousness and conscience.

Genocide awareness education, however, cannot be separated from other fields and disciplines. It is clearly a vital dimension of all learning about human rights. It should be a component of general social justice education. Human beings need to learn non-violent ways of resolving interpersonal and intergroup conflicts, and genocide awareness is certainly a valid aspect of this type of instruction. It is hard to conceive of a worthwhile moral development education or values clarification program that excludes the topic of genocide awareness. Multicultural and international studies require inquiries into the tragic capacity of societies to foster alienation and discord that culminates in holocausts. This realm must also be a part of scientific studies because in many instances it is scientific discoveries and technological innovations that are used for destructive purposes. Genocide awareness education is equally relevant to the humanities; especially art, history, literature and music. Profound feelings about genocidal experiences can be expressed in dramas and poetry. In short, genocide awareness education does belong on a single day or week in April. It must not be segregated as the special topic taught by a single teacher, or offered in a lone instructional department. On the contrary, it must become a integral part of curricula at all levels everywhere.

NOTES

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2 Yearbook of the United Nations, 1948-1949. New York: The United Nations, 1950, p. 959.

3 Raphael Lemkin, Axis Rule in Occupied Europe. New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944, p. 79.

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